

What Did You Do Email

Dear Agency and Department Heads,

We write regarding the email that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) transmitted to federal employees on the evening of Saturday, February 22, 2025, and its apparent direct relationship to Elon Musk's public threat to dismiss any employees who do not respond.

Mr. Musk's threat is reckless, cruel, unlawful, and unenforceable. You must take immediate action to clarify that the federal employees at your agency are not obligated to respond to this ill-conceived email stunt and that nonresponse cannot constitute resignation.

On February 22, 2025, Elon Musk tweeted that "all federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week. Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation." Just hours later, OPM sent an email instructing federal employees all across the government to "please reply to this email with approx. 5 bullets of what [they] accomplished last week and cc [their] manager."

Whether Mr. Musk understands it or not, America is a nation of laws, our government is a system of checks and balances, and federal agencies will not be reorganized by social media post. This stunt is yet another example of the cruel and arbitrary chaos Mr. Musk inflicts on the American people by carelessly 'taking a chainsaw' to the people's government and the dedicated public servants who keep it running. Mr. Musk's consistent refusal to take any amount of care before disrupting operations across the federal government imposes far greater costs than it will legitimately save.

The nature of Mr. Musk's employment is opaque, likely unlawful, and has been cloaked in secrecy since day one of this Administration. What is clear and reflected in the cruel dismissal-threat tweet and ham-handed OPM email that followed, is that Mr. Musk lacks a basic understanding of how the federal government works. For example, the OPM email was sent to individuals who do not even work in the Executive Branch—including sitting federal judges.

Neither Musk's tweet nor the email account for the fact that many federal workers will not be receiving this email in time to respond by the deadline as they may be away from their secure workstation, on medical leave, or away from their email for completely justifiable reasons. He also, disturbingly, appears to be unaware that many federal employees are locked out of their systems due to DOGE's ongoing intrusion into federal information technology infrastructure. Finally, neither Musk nor OPM has explained to the public how OPM and the agencies would even review and process potentially two million responses from across the government—which are duplicative of existing performance management procedures—without diverting resources and costing the American people money and services.

The OPM email and Mr. Musk's social media post unleashed chaos throughout the federal government leaving millions of public servants unclear how to respond and agency leaders scrambling to determine how to proceed. Various federal agencies, including the Department of State and National Security Agency, have already appropriately informed federal employees not to respond to the email.⁵ Even Kash Patel, the Administration's new Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) clarified that OPM and Mr. Musk do not control agency staff, including in a message sent to FBI employees that, "the FBI, through the Office of the Director, is in charge of all of our review processes and will conduct reviews in accordance with FBI procedures."

Saturday's actions are a clear attempt by the Trump Administration to force the departure of dedicated civil servants who resoundingly refused to take the bait on Mr. Musk's scam "deferred resignation" offer. It won't work. Federal workers are committed to serving the American people. Indiscriminate online bullying will not advance any serious effort to ensure that the federal workforce is efficient, well-qualified, motivated, and deployed to maximize the effectiveness of government for the American people.

To this day, despite repeated inquiries from Congress, we do not know Mr. Musk's official status in government, we do not know what his financial conflicts of interest may be, and we do not know what—if any—control President Trump actually has over his actions. The capricious dismissal threatened in Mr. Musk's post would be illegal and cannot be tolerated. We urge you to immediately inform federal workers at your agency that his missives do not constitute official orders and that federal employees should not interrupt their service to the public to respond to OPM's mass email. You must also make clear that Mr. Musk's threat of dismissal due to nonresponse to OPM's email is invalid.

Sincerely,

